

UNCLE, GIVE ME A CIGARETTE.

Written by

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Based on, If Any

Address
Phone Number

1 EXT. PRISON YARD RINGED BY SMALL CELLS**1**

Birds flying in the sky. The sun is shining. Walid looks up and is holding his hand in front of his eyes, trying to see the birds without burning his eyes by the sun. He manages to see them. Calmness arrives in his eyes. Another prisoner taps his shoulder.

PRISONER 1

Don't you dream, my Comrad.

Walid looks in the direction the comrad showed him while he hears the jangling of two sets of handcuffs.

A prison guard holds those handcuffs in his hands and while he approaches Walid and the other 7 Prisoners, he throws the handcuffs on the ground right in front of them.

There is one bundle to tie the hands and another, with longer chains, to tie the legs. The 8 Prisoners are standing in line next to each other. The guard throws each pair in front of each one of the Prisoners.

The guard starts Handcuffing the prisoners.

Looking at the Handcuffs in front of him, Walid leans on the wall behind him while waiting to be the last in line.

WALID VOICE OVER

I was tired of being moved between prisons since we started the open hunger strike.

He gathers his energy and tries to take in as much air as possible. While he breaths in and out, he, again, looks to the sky, trying to see the birds. The sun is burning.

WALID VOICE OVER

I did this all the time, trying to take in as much air as possible in preparation for a journey that will last hours, inside an iron box that in this heat quickly turns into an unbearable furnace.

Footsteps getting louder when the guard finished handcuffing the other prisoners and is standing now in front of Walid.

GUARD

(grimmy)

Stay straight and give me your hands now, will you!

The Guard first handcuffs Walid and then kicks Walids feet to make more space.

He chains his feet now.

GUARD
(smiling)
Now look again at the birds and
dream of flying.

The guard leaves the yard to get more handcuffs.

Walid closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

2 EXT/INT. DARK CELL BEHIND WALID

2

LITTLE BOY
Uncle, give me a cigarette.

Walid opens his eyes. He asks himself if he was dreaming and turns around to see who called him. Looking into the dark, he cannot see anyone and for a moment he thinks he is delirious.

LITTLE BOY
(louder and more
desperate)
Uncle, my uncle! Give me a
cigarette.

Walid stares into the cell again and calls to the voice.

WALID
Where are you?

LITTLE BOY
Im here, down here!

Walid looks down to a slot in the bottom of a door.

WALID VOICE OVER
After 26 years in prison, I asked
myself if I was getting crazy. Was
there really a boy talking to me
through that slot we received our
food and have our hands tied before
let out of the cell?

Hunching down, he peers through the slot and sees a child, not older than twelve years old. A child asking for a cigarette.

WALID VOICE OVER

I didn't know how to respond to him. Should I give him a cigarette, I wondered, or should I educate him about the dangers of smoking in the way that adults do with children outside prison?

Walid looks in disbelief while he sees the young kid all alone in this cell.

WALID VOICE OVER

Adults, adults...and then I am struck by the fact I am including myself in this category. By the fact that he called me "uncle".

Walid turns away from the door.

WALID

(to himself)

Am I so old already?

Walid is terrified by the fact being addressed in this manner. He looks at the other prisoners, which are standing in line, handcuffed and waiting to get transported.

WALID VOICE OVER

It was the first time during my imprisonment that I have met someone speaking to me across such a distance of age. In Prisons we are used to not addressing each other in this way, with social honorifics marking our age. Regardless of what our age differences may be, we all address each other as "my brother" or "comrade" and, more recently, "fighter".

Walid looks at his hands before he holds them in front of his eyes again to look up to the sky.

WALID VOICE OVER

I considered the child, empathizing with his craving for the cigarette. The craving is not for the rush of the nicotine but for what the cigarette connotes.

Walid turns again to the door and reaches for his cigarettes. The little boy notes that and comes closer to the door.

WALID VOICE OVER

Frightened, a mere child in the harsh world of the prison, he wanted to become a man quickly.

The Boys hands reach outside the slot of the bottom of the door. Walid handles him the cigarette.

WALID

wait..

Walid takes the cigarette back and lights it up for the boy, before he handles it back to him.

WALID VOICE OVER

Meanwhile, it is now my desire to turn back time so that I can become a child, at least a young man, the way I was when I entered prison more than a quarter of a century ago.

Walid lightens up his own cigarette and enjoys the smoke while he tries to comprehend.

WALID VOICE OVER

Both of us were fearful. I was fearful for the time that has passed and he was fearful of what had not yet passed. I was afraid of the past and he was afraid of the future. I was afraid of having lived a life that had burnt out in prison, and he was afraid of what the cigarette that was now lodged between his lips could not burn away.

The boy standing tall now on his toes, appearing now older than his age, exhales the smoke of the cigarette. The ember glow now becomes a lantern in his hand, chasing away the darkness of the cell, dispelling his fear and loneliness.

WALID VOICE OVER

He was not smoking but trying to dispel the image of a child that so incontrovertibly clung to him. In the world of the prison, in the face of the cruelty of its guards, childhood is a burden. Knowing that he was to face years of imprisonment, he was seeking to rid himself of his vulnerability and innocence, for which he clearly had no further use-it having made no difference to the judge that had sentenced him to four years.

The guard comes back with a new set of handcuffs. He pushes Walid to the side, away from the cell door.

GUARD
Move, will you?!

Now he is talking louder, towards the child inside the door..

GUARD
(Barking)
Push your hands through the slot!

The boy is pushing his hands through the slot, still holding the cigarette in his fingers.

GUARD
(Shouting)
Drop the cigarette!

The boy obeys, letting the cigarette fall in front of the guard.

GUARD
(Muttering to himself)
(bemoaning the sight of a
child smoking)
Taking care of children now?!

Nevertheless he proceeded with the handcuffing, remaining unmoved by the sight of those small hands in handcuffs. Because the child's wrists are too small, however, he struggles several times to secure the handcuffs.

GUARD
Fuck it! Stay straight, put your
feet right here!

The guard points behind the slot on the bottom of the door. The boy obeys and stays straight, with his feet right in front of the slot. The guard uses the handcuffs to chain the boy's legs.

He opens the door now to move the boy out of the cell.

The guard leaves them.

Walid looks at the boy and imagines him being his own son while he stays next to him, in line with the other prisoners.

WALID VOICE OVER

I imagined that he was my own son,
such as fate has not yet wanted to
bring into the world. I wanted with
every strain of my being to hug
him.

As these paternal feelings are surging through Walid, he feels an overwhelming desire to cry. Tears are starting to come in Walid's eyes, but he decides to hide his feelings.

WALID VOICE OVER

I did not want to shatter the image
of the man that he wanted now to
become.

Walid walks over to him, so as to shake his hand as a comrade and a rival, asking,

WALID

How are you, fighter?